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ABSTRACT

This report presents data from a 2001 telephone survey of registered voters that examined community attitudes and expectations regarding public education in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system (CMS). Respondents were committed to improving public schools and willing to increase taxes to achieve that goal. They expressed ambivalence regarding the quality of CMS schools. Respondents supported the use of state tests in promotion decisions. They confessed ignorance about key educational issues. On issues of equity and student assignment, results were complicated. For example, 78 percent rated ensuring equity of facilities and resources among schools as very important, and 55 percent considered it the most important issue. About 75 percent considered it very important to renovate schools, while 57 percent considered it very important to build new schools. Busing for racial balance elicited strong divisions between whites and blacks, though overall the community did not support it. Confidence in educational decision-making declined from the previous year, though teachers continued to draw the highest ratings, with 50 percent of respondents indicating high-confidence in teachers. Three appendixes present a profile of focus group participants who provided information to guide the survey, the survey questionnaire, and a profile of school districts according to demographic information provided by survey respondents. (SM)

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2001 Community Assessment

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"Putting the Public in Public Education"

2001
Community Assessment

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About the cover:
All year, the kindergarten classes at Derita Elementary have been studying themes that connect the kindergartners to the "real world." After visiting a retail store, the fire station, the airport, and the post office, they worked in conjunction with the art teacher to create a mural depicting their community.
Teacher: Meg Goodman; Teacher Assistant: Waynette Bullard; Art Teacher: Christina Joye

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Executive Summary

According to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation's 7th annual Community Assessment, the typical registered voter in Mecklenburg County is committed to improving the quality of public schools, strongly supports ensuring equity among the schools but not busing to achieve racial balance, and is not very well informed about current issues affecting the schools.

This information was obtained from a telephone survey of 1,210 registered voters here in March of 2001. This Executive Summary and the full report describe the findings of the survey, pointing out changes to responses over time and variances among different groups.

Highlights and key points of the poll include:

- ✓ Of five local issues, education was again ranked as most important. Over half of the respondents support raising local taxes to fund schools. This is true whether or not respondents have children in school (and 65% do not). However, there appears to be a disconnect between passionate support for improving schools and lukewarm support for increasing taxes to pay the cost.
- ✓ Charlotte's schools are viewed by survey respondents as somewhat better than North Carolina's but worse than the nation's. While CMS parents are generally satisfied with the schools and are somewhat more likely than non-parents to think that CMS is improving, fewer parents than in the past think that local schools are better than two years ago. Overall, local schools get an undistinguished "C".
- ✓ There is strong-support for ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools. Voters support ensuring that both low-income and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools, *and*, by a somewhat smaller majority, respondents support assigning students to neighborhood schools even if it results in economic or racial segregation.
- ✓ Overall, the community does not support busing to achieve racial balance, but there is deep racial division on this issue. Some 27% of respondents give busing strong-support (8-10 on a 1-10 scale): just 15% of whites, but 62% of African Americans. The racial split on this issue has increased since last year, primarily because of increased support among African Americans. Interestingly, African American support for neighborhood schools also increased.
- ✓ While confidence in educational decision-making declined since last year, teachers continued to draw the highest ratings, with 50% of respondents indicating high-confidence (8-10 on 1-10 scale) in teachers. Next was the superintendent, at 40%. Just 18% expressed high-confidence in the school board, and only 12% said they had high-confidence in the county commission.

- ✓ Despite massive communication efforts by CMS about potential student retentions as the state's new no-social-promotion mandates begin phasing in this year, many voters (including CMS parents) still confess ignorance. And, although the poll was conducted among registered voters, few were informed about this fall's school board elections.

Registered voters are committed to improving public schools.

The Community Assessment asks respondents to rank fives issues in order of their importance. In 2001, 52% ranked "improving public schools" as most important; a total of 74% ranked it as either the most important or second most important. "Preventing crime" received the second most votes (16%) for being the most important issue.

Participants have strong interests in the quality of public schools, whether or not they have children enrolled. Among respondents who are *not* parents or guardians of children in K-12, 44% rated "improving public schools" as the most important issue; "preventing crime" was the first choice of 18%. The broad-based commitment of our community to improving the quality of its public schools is also demonstrated by the fact that 70.5% of voters approved last fall's school bonds.

Willingness to increase taxes is another indication of the public's commitment to schools.

"Not raising taxes" was picked as the most important issue by just 11% of respondents. When asked about their level of support (on a scale of 1-10) for increasing county taxes to fund schools, a clear majority, 57%, ranked themselves at the positive end of the scale (6-10); 37% registered strong-support (8-10). At the other end, just 21% said they were strongly *not* in support (1-3).

Voters indicated that a number of initiatives to improve schools are highly important to them (8-10): improving teacher pay (82%), ensuring equity (78%), and providing more computers and high-tech resources (71%). While less passionate about higher taxes than improved schools, they are still moderately willing to increase their investment.

Registered voters expressed ambivalence regarding the quality of CMS.

In response to whether quality is better or worse than two years ago, results were:

- *Better*: 15% of non-parents, compared to 22% of parents with children only in CMS.
- *Worse*: 26% of non-parents, 20% of CMS-only parents.
- *About the same*: 35% of non-parents, 53% of CMS-only parents.
- *Don't know*: 25% of non-parents, 5% of CMS-only parents.

In all, the ratings from parents are somewhat higher than for non-parents. But over the last few years, the percentage of parents who think schools are better

than two years ago has eroded, and the percentage that thinks the schools are worse has increased.

The grade for CMS is still a "C", as it was last year, with CMS parents giving the schools a bit higher grade than non-parents. Both parents and non-parents tended to grade U.S. schools the highest (a bit above "C"), CMS next and North Carolina schools the lowest. When asked to grade their oldest child's school, parents gave higher grades, averaging almost a "B".

The school system may satisfy its constituents, but it doesn't excite them or the general public. The findings regarding parent satisfaction are virtually the same as last year: some 70% of parents are either very satisfied (26%) or somewhat satisfied (44%). African American parents tend to be less satisfied with CMS than whites, but give CMS a slightly higher average grade.

Registered voters support the use of state tests in promotion decisions.

- Nearly half, 46%, expressed strong-support for using the state tests in promotion decisions (8-10 on a scale of 1-10), and 63% at least some level of support (6-10).
- Only 15% expressed strong lack of support (1-3 on scale of 1-10).

Many registered voters confessed ignorance about key educational issues, including this fall's school board elections.

- 74% fell into the "don't know/refused" category when asked about which seats are up for re-election. Just 3% knew that only the district seats are scheduled for election.
- On the no-social-promotion rules, 66% said they know very little or nothing.
- On vouchers and charter schools, 52%-55% said they know very little or nothing.
- Only on a state lottery to fund schools did less than half of voters (43%) say they know very little or nothing.

On the issues of equity and student assignment, the results are complicated and help to explain why school board members don't always act like they are hearing one, consistent voice:

- 78% rated ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools as very important (8-10). More than half, 55%, gave this issue a "10" for importance.
- 75% said it was very important (8-10) to *renovate* schools, compared to 57% that said it was very important to *build new* schools.
- Asked in a different question to choose between renovating existing schools and building new ones, 14% picked building new, 46% picked renovating, and 36% said they should get equal priority. A similar question was asked about where new schools should be built: 30% said inner city, 19% said the suburbs, and 43% said they are equal.

- Half of the respondents *strongly* support ensuring that low-income students and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools (8-10 on a 1-10 scale). Support increases to nearly two-thirds when all the supportive responses are included (6-10).

- Support for assigning children to neighborhood schools, even if it results in the concentration of low-income and minority children in a few schools, received less support, but still 40% - 42% gave it strong-support (8-10). When the threshold is lowered to include ratings of 6-10, neighborhood schools drew 57%-58% overall support, roughly 60% of whites and 45% of African Americans.

- Busing for racial balance elicited strong divisions between whites and African Americans. Overall, just 27% gave it strong-support (8-10) and only 40% gave it ratings of 6-10. It drew strong-support from 62% of African Americans, but from only 15% of whites. At the other end of the spectrum, 42% of whites and just 11% of African Americans give it little or no support (1-3).

When asked about the importance of certain items and the perceived performance of CMS on those same items, importance is always viewed as higher than performance.

- Voters gave highest rankings for both importance and CMS performance to making students and teachers feel safe at school.

- Lowest in importance was building new schools, but it ranked second in terms of CMS performance.

- The greatest *gaps* between importance and performance were for increasing teacher salaries, reducing the dropout rate and ensuring equity of facilities and resources among schools.

With respect to what students should be prepared for, respondents said that students' preparation for four-year college is most *important*, with two-year college/vocational school not far behind, and direct entry into the workforce a distinct third. CMS *performance* ratings followed the same order.

Respondents were also asked to choose between preparing students for four-year college and preparing them to go to work right after high school. Preparing for four-year college was picked as the priority by 40%, preparation for entering the workplace right after high school by 13%, and 43% said the two options should get equal priority.

CMS needs to be judged by how it is doing, not by national rhetoric or the reputations of urban districts in general.

Polls are about attitudes and perceptions, not absolutes. In Mecklenburg, perception appears to lag behind reality. This year's poll results look a lot like those in previous years, yet there are great changes in the schools.

CMS is making tremendous efforts to reach at-risk 4-year-olds, achieve equity, upgrade reading instruction, and achieve specific goals. CMS has miles to go before it can sleep, but there have been real gains in raising overall achievement.

Progress requires effort from schools and parents, of course, *and also* from the public and its elected representatives. Finding common ground upon which to build excellence is the key. While just one small player, CMEF will do short research reports on key topics, share its findings with other groups, publish a second *State of Public Education Report*, and repeat its *Make Your Mark on the Board* campaign of public forums and candidate education for this year's school board elections.

Introduction

Each year since 1995 the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation (CMEF) has conducted a survey of community attitudes, perceptions, and expectations regarding public education. The results are reported in our annual Community Assessment.

The *2001 Community Assessment* surveyed registered voters across Mecklenburg County's six Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners' districts between March 2 and March 21, 2001. Telephone interviews were completed with 1,210 registered voters, approximately the same number in each district. The sample was demographically balanced by district, race, sex and age. The Demographics section of this report describes the weighted composition of the survey participants. The results of the *2001 Community Assessment* can be generalized to the populations of registered voters in Mecklenburg County. The margin of error is +/- 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This means that in "19 out of 20 such studies, the results would differ no more than plus or minus 2.8 percentage points if every registered voter in the population were interviewed." (KPC Research). The margin of error for an individual district is +/- 6.9 percentage points.

This study does not report tests of statistical significance, and caution ought to be exercised when drawing *comparisons* among responses from year to year and among different demographic groups. Every effort has been made to use terms such as "appears to" and "tends to" when describing comparisons within the survey data, in order to convey our sense of caution. Some differences between data points may not be large enough to enable definitive conclusions to be drawn about one year versus another or among demographic groups.

Approximately three-quarters of adults in Mecklenburg County are registered voters. This survey samples voters instead of the adult population as a whole because registered voters are generally more likely than residents who are not registered to vote to have an opinion on specific issues. Further, because these are the individuals who ideally go to the polls, their opinions carry weight with elected officials such as the school board and county commissioners.

To help to prepare the survey tool for the *2001 Community Assessment*, a set of three focus groups was conducted by KPC Research in early February. The purpose of the focus groups was to identify the important issues in local public education from the perspective of participants and to test the wording of the questions to be used in the survey. A total of 27 registered voters participated, all of whom described themselves as "very interested" in local educational issues. Twenty-four of the 27 have lived in Mecklenburg County for six or more years. Please refer to Appendix A for additional information regarding focus group participants.

Guidance from focus group participants, CMEF's commitment to track certain issues from one year to the next, and the need to limit the length of the survey

out of respect for interviewees' time were key factors in the composition of this year's survey tool. Priorities for the *2001 Community Assessment* included voters' attitudes, perceptions and knowledge regarding the following topics:

- Leadership, decision-making and upcoming elections
- Current issues, such as vouchers, charter schools, and state testing
- Alternatives for achieving equity, increasing school capacity, and student assignment
- Ongoing issues of teacher pay, safety, technology, and the drop-out rate
- Preparing students for the workplace versus college
- Overall quality and parent satisfaction

In three different sets of questions, respondents provided answers on a scale of 1-10. These questions ask for perceptions of importance, performance, and support on several topics. Responses of 1-5 are those on the bottom half of the scale, and responses of 6-10 are those on the top half of the scale. Scores of 8-10 denote high-importance, high-performance, or strong-support. Scores of 1-3 denote low-importance, poor-performance, or strong-lack-of-support.

Occasionally, respondents elected not to answer a question. Those responses are noted in the "don't know/refused" category, which explains why certain percentage distributions described in the text do not total 100%.

Throughout the text, the pronoun "we" refers to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation. A complete copy of the 2001 survey tool is located in Appendix B. Appendix C presents a profile of each of the six school districts according to the demographic information provided by survey respondents from each district.

Demographics

The demographic composition of this year's survey participants, after weighting, is summarized below.

Racial Distribution:

White	African American	Native American	Asian	Other
74%	23%	<0.5%	1%	2%

(Three percent reported that they are of Hispanic origin or descent.)

Age Distribution:

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
7%	20%	22%	25%	13%	13%

 # Years in Mecklenburg County:

</=5	6-10	11-20	>20	DK/Refused
16%	19%	21%	44%	1%

 # Adults in Household:

1	2	3+
17%	65%	17%

 # Children in Household:

0	1	2	3+
55%	19%	19%	7%

Level of Education Completed:

Grade 8 Or Less	Some High School	HS Grad	Some College or Spec/Tech Training	Coll. Grad.	Post-Grad. Study or Adv. Degree
1%	5%	18%	29%	31%	16%

Income Distribution:

< $40,000	$40,000+ & refused to be more specific	$40,000 - <$50,000	$50,000 - <$60,000	$60,000 - $75,000	> $75,000	Refused
24%	8%	9%	9%	9%	28%	13%

Sixty-five percent of survey participants reported that they are *not* the parent or guardian of any children enrolled in grades K-12. They may have no children, only preschool children, or only adult children. In last year's Community Assessment, the figure was even higher at 70%. Twenty-seven percent of the participants indicated that they have at least one child enrolled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. About 10% of the sample have children in private, religious, charter, or home schools. These figures exceed 100% because a small number of respondents have children in both public and private schools.

One might assume that the clear majority of survey participants (65%) do not perceive themselves as having a current or immediate stake in the quality of our public school system. However, the results show that participants do, indeed, have strong interests in the quality of public schools, whether or not they have children enrolled. The broad-based commitment of our community to improving

the quality of its public schools is also demonstrated by the fact that 70.5% of voters approved last fall's school bonds. The survey results highlight the fact that the quality of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is a priority issue among registered voters.

Results

Issues of Importance

Voters rated "improving public education" as the *most* important issue in Mecklenburg County. Every year, the Community Assessment provides a list of timely and relevant community issues to survey respondents, asking them to indicate where each falls in terms of importance. While the list of issues is not identical from year to year, public education has remained at the top every year.

In 2001, 52% ranked "improving public schools" as most important; a total of 74% ranked it as either the most important or second most important. "Preventing crime" received the second most votes for being the most important issue, 16% - far fewer than the 52% received for "improving public schools".

Among respondents who are *not* parents or guardians of children in K-12, 44% rated "improving public schools" as the most important issue. In second place was "preventing crime", the choice of 18% as the most important issue.

Table 1: Ranking Issues of Importance

	% Indicating as Most Important Issue – *2001*	% Indicating as Most Important Issue - *2000*	% Indicating as Most Important Issue - *1999*
Improving public schools	52%	46%	41%
Preventing crime	16%	21%	25%
Improving transportation, including road repair, construction, and public transportation	13%	12%	20%
Not raising taxes	11%	12%	Not asked
Investing in the development of the center city, including entertainment, housing, and business	3%	Not asked	Not asked
Don't know / refused	3%	5%	4%
All should receive the same	2%	<0.5%	7%
Maintaining the vitality of the local economy	Not asked	4%	1%
Improving parks and recreation	Not asked	Not asked	3%

Note: The list of issues is modified slightly year to year in an attempt to capture the most relevant and timely local issues.

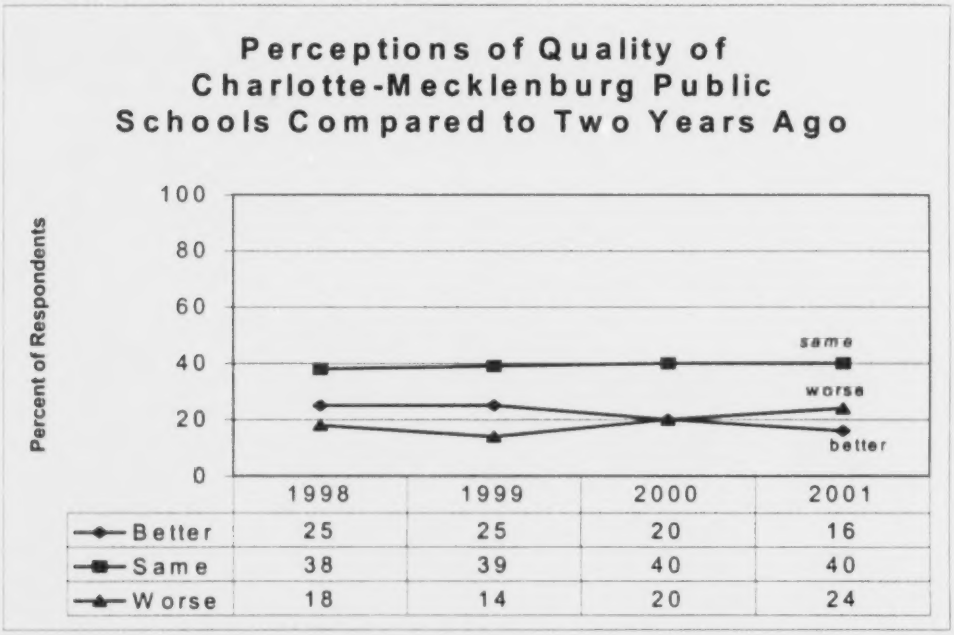
Quality and Parent Satisfaction

The community's perceptions of the overall quality of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) were explored through three different questions:

- "Would you say the overall quality of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School System is better, worse or about the same as it was two years ago?"
- "On the whole, are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with your child's or children's education who are enrolled (in CMS)?"
- "What grade would you give public schools in the United States, public schools in the state of North Carolina, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools, and your oldest child's school?"

In response to the first question, the data over the last four years suggest an unfavorable trend. Sixteen percent responded that the quality is *better* than two years ago, compared to 20% to 25% in previous years. A larger percentage indicated that the quality is *worse* than two years ago: 24% this year, compared to 14% to 20% in the previous three years. The proportion responding that quality is about the *same* as two years ago has remained at about 40% each year. These trends are illustrated in Graph 1, below.

Graph 1



	1998	1999	2000	2001
Better	25	25	20	16
Same	38	39	40	40
Worse	18	14	20	24

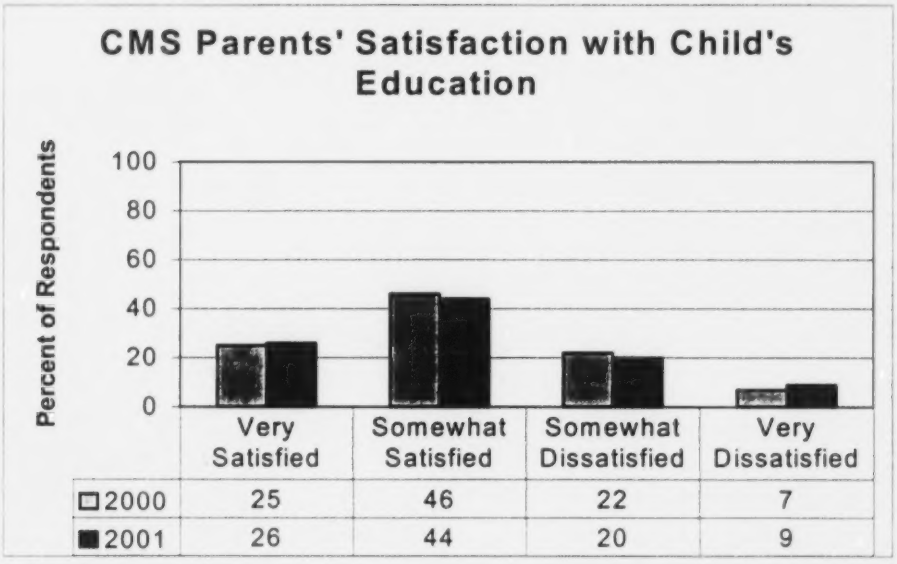
Note. The percentages for each year do not total 100 because approximately 20% respond each year that they don't know or they elect not to respond.

There are no notable differences among school board districts or race in terms of the distribution of responses. Having children in K-12, CMS only, or no school age children does not appear to alter this trend; the percentage that says quality

is better than two years ago has declined over the last four years 7-10 percentage points for all three groups. In 2001, 26% of respondents who do *not* have children in K-12 said that quality is worse, compared to about 21% of those who *do* have children in K-12 or in CMS only. A higher percentage of parents of children enrolled in CMS perceive that quality is better than those with children in K-12 overall or those without school age children, 22% compared to 15% to 19%.

With respect to the second question on perceptions of quality, 70% of parents with children enrolled in CMS responded that they are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their child's or children's education. The distribution of responses is nearly identical to last year's distribution, as shown in Graph 2, below.

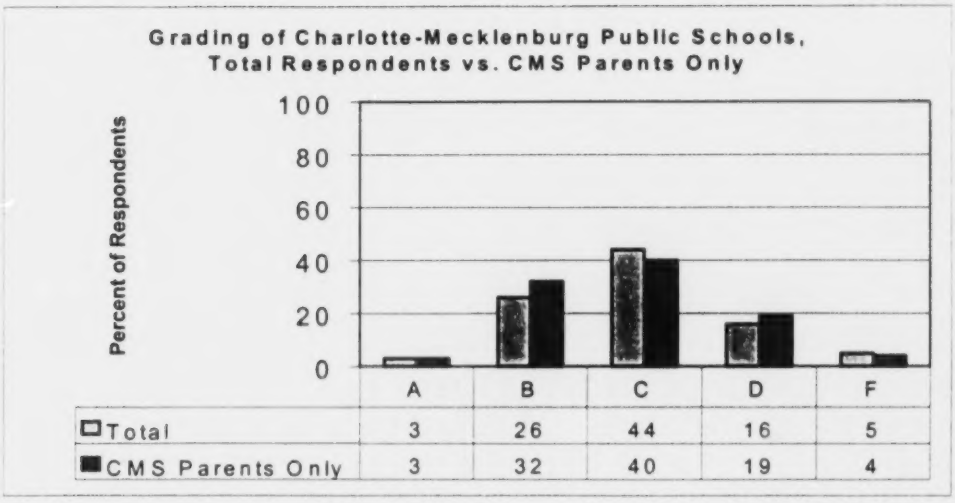
Graph 2



In response to the request that respondents assign a letter grade to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, a grade of "C" continues to be given more frequently than any other grade. This year, 44% gave CMS a grade of "C", compared to 47% last year, with the other grades being nearly identical between the two years.

There were no noteworthy differences between the grading by those who have children in K-12 versus those who do not. Parents with children enrolled in CMS (as opposed to private, religious, charter, or home-schooled) provided only slightly higher grades to CMS than the total survey sample. CMS parents gave a larger percentage of "B" grades, a slightly smaller percentage of "C" grades, but a slightly larger percentage of "D" grades. Graph 3 presents the comparison between CMS parents and the total survey sample.

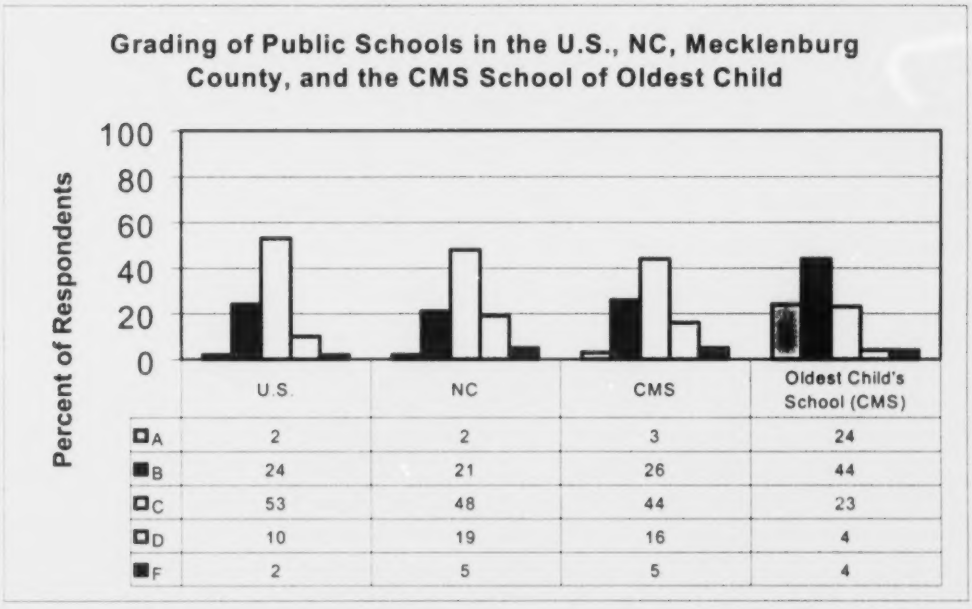
Graph 3



	A	B	C	D	F
Total	3	26	44	16	5
CMS Parents Only	3	32	40	19	4

Survey participants also graded U.S. schools, NC schools, and their oldest child's school. Graph 4, below, shows how respondents graded each of these groups.

Graph 4



	U.S.	NC	CMS	Oldest Child's School (CMS)
A	2	2	3	24
B	24	21	26	44
C	53	48	44	23
D	10	19	16	4
F	2	5	5	4

As Graph 4 shows, 24% gave a grade of "A" to their oldest child's (CMS) school, while only 2% or 3% to U.S., NC, and CMS schools as a whole. Only 8% gave a "D" or "F" to their oldest child's school, but 24% gave a "D" or "F" to NC schools, and 21% gave "D" or "F" to CMS as a whole.

A way to simplify comparisons is to convert grades to a grade point average (GPA). Table 2, below, shows the GPAs given to various levels of schools by three groups of respondents: those without school-age children, those with K-12 children (whether in public or private schools) and those with children only in CMS. Several trends are apparent:

- The highest GPAs are for the oldest child's school.
- All three groups said that schools in CMS are better than in the state as a whole, but not as good as schools in the nation as a whole.

Table 2: Grade Point Averages of Public Schools in the U.S., NC, Mecklenburg County, and Oldest Child's School

	U.S.	NC	CMS	Oldest Child's School
Parents/Guardians of Children in K-12	2.14	1.96	2.00	2.96
Respondents with No Children in K-12	2.14	1.98	2.11	---
Parent/Guardians of Children in CMS Only	2.19	2.07	2.12	2.82

There are some differences worth noting between the general patterns of responses found in the 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (2000) and the CMEF *2001 Community Assessment.* The grading by respondents to the nationwide PDK/Gallup Survey was *more* critical of U.S. schools and *less* critical of the schools within respondents' local areas than were respondents to the *2001 Community Assessment.* (Note that the PDK/Gallup poll results are for 2000, and the CMEF poll results are for 2001).

- When looking at local schools, for example, 29% of Mecklenburg County voters gave their public school system grades of "A" or "B", compared to 47% of PDK/Gallup Poll participants.
- When looking at schools nationally, 26% of Mecklenburg County voters gave U.S. schools a grade of "A" or "B", compared to 20% of PDK/Gallup Poll participants.

The Mecklenburg County community tends to be less complimentary of its local school system and more complimentary of U.S. schools as a whole than citizens across the nation appear to be regarding their own local schools and U.S. schools.

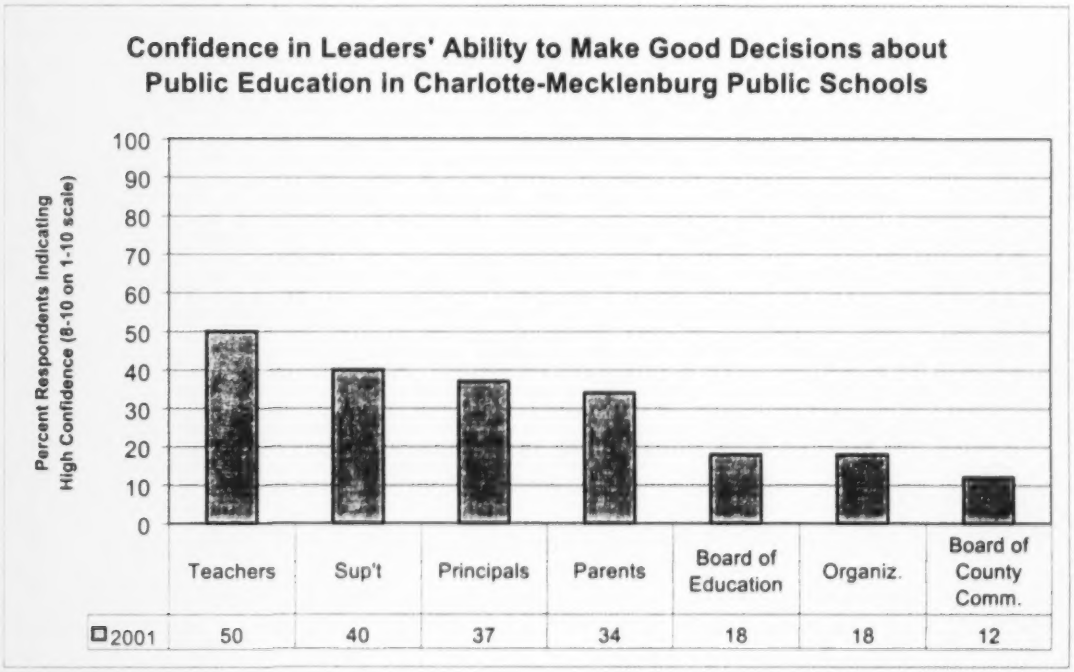
Leadership, Decision-Making and Elections

Survey participants were asked about their opinions and awareness concerning leaders in public education, in the following three questions:

- "On a scale of 1-10, how much confidence do you have in these individuals' (Principals, Teachers, Board of Education, Organizations for the Improvement of Education, Parents, Superintendent of Schools, and Board of County Commissioners) ability to make good decisions about public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools?"
- "Thinking about the school board, do you personally feel your *district* school board representative should represent the best interests of your *district* or the best interests of the *entire county*?"
- "To your knowledge, in the fall of this year are the *district* school board representatives,... the *at-large* school board representatives, ...both district and at-large ...representatives up for re-election, or are *no* school board representatives up for re-election this fall?"

Survey results suggest that confidence in leaders' ability to make good decisions about public education in CMS has declined for all groups from last year's confidence levels. The percentage indicating high-confidence (8-10 on a scale of 1-10) in the superintendent dropped less than for others. Teachers continue to receive the largest percentage of high-confidence ratings. Graphs 5 and 6 present the percentage of high-confidence ratings for each group.

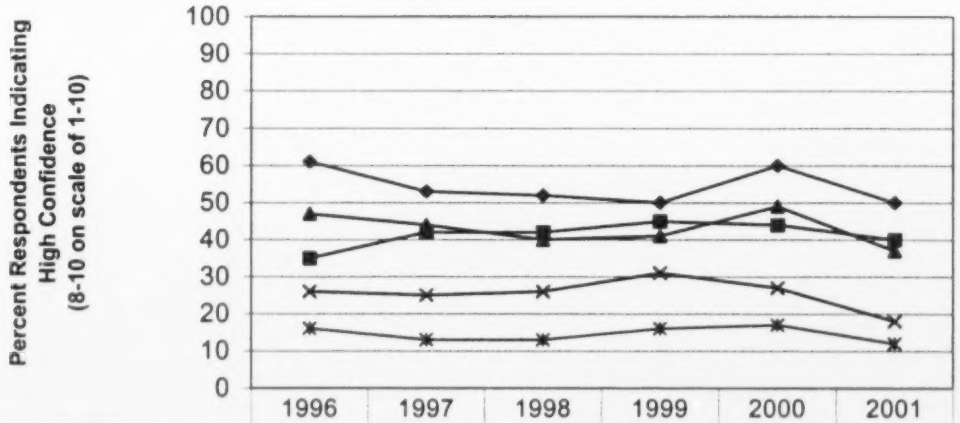
Graph 5



Slight wording changes have been made over the last several years to this question. Note that prior to 2000, the Board of Education was referred to as "school board members". In 2000, community organizations for the improvement of education were referred to as "organizations for education improvement", but in 2001, the earlier wording was resumed. The 2000 and 2001 polls specified the Board of County Commissioners; earlier polls simply spoke of "elected officials" or "elected officials other than school board members". Additionally, the current superintendent didn't arrive until August of 1996, after the 1996 Community Assessment was conducted, which may have contributed to the rise in the superintendent's high-confidence rating between 1996 and 1997.

Graph 6

Confidence in Leaders' Ability to Make Good Decisions, 1996 - 2001



	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Teachers	61	53	52	50	60	50
Superintendent	35	42	42	45	44	40
Principals	47	44	40	41	49	37
Board of Education	26	25	26	31	27	18
Board of County Comm.	16	13	13	16	17	12

Examination of next year's data may clarify whether this year's decline is an aberration or the beginning of a trend. It is worth noting that the school board's ratings for high-confidence have declined over the last *two* years from 31% to 18%.

There are many differences among demographic groups in the percentages of high-confidence ratings. Among the differences are the following observations:

- *Superintendent*
  - He earned the most high-confidence ratings from District 5, 49%, and the least from District 3, 30%.

- About 30% of those who have lived in Mecklenburg County five years or less gave the superintendent a high-confidence rating, compared to 38%-45% in those groups that have lived here longer.
- His high-confidence ratings also differed by race, age, and education:
  - 33% for African Americans, 43% for whites
  - 31% for 18-34 year olds, 52% for those over 55
  - 40% for those with up to a high school education, 47% for those with post-graduate degrees.

- *Principals*
  - Confidence was lowest among respondents in District 3, 31%, and highest in District 6, 44%.
- *Board of Education*
  - It received high-confidence ratings by about 12% of respondents in Districts 5 and 6, and by 31% and 25% of respondents in Districts 2 and 3.
  - Ratings for high-confidence also differed by years in Mecklenburg County, race, education, and income:
    - 12% among those living here for less than six years, 21% for those living here for over 20 years
    - 15% for whites, 29% for African Americans
    - 13% for college graduates, 28% for those with up to a high school education
    - 16% for those with incomes greater than $60,000, 25% for those with incomes of less than $30,000.
- *County Commissioners*
  - The greatest variances in high-confidence ratings were by district and race:
    - 7% to 8% in Districts 4 and 5, 23% in District 2
    - 9% among whites, 22% among African Americans.

When asked about whose interests the district school board representatives should represent, just over half of those polled, 52%, said the entire county, over and above the respective district. Thirty-four percent responded that their school board representative should represent the best interests of their district and 7% said *both* the district and the county. These results are consistent with those of prior years.

Sixty-two percent of African American respondents think their district's school board representatives should represent the county. Only 26% think they should represent their district, and still fewer, 7%, think they should represent both the county and the district. Among whites, 50% believe that their district's school board representatives should represent the county over their district, 36% think they should represent the district, and 8% believe they should represent both equally.

Overall, 39% of District 6 respondents versus only 26% of those from District 2 believe their school board representative should represent their district, not the county.

As to knowledge of elections, nearly three-quarters of respondents reported that they do not know which school board seats are up for re-election this fall, district only, at-large only, both, or neither. Only 3% provided the correct response: district school board representatives are up for re-election.

Some might interpret this finding as predictable and far from alarming, given that the election is over five months away. Others might view this as a serious sign of ignorance and a bit ironic, given that the same survey identified public education as the single most important local issue. Either way, the months between now and the election provide an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness about the election and the candidates.

Understanding of Current Educational Issues

In addition to the inquiry into registered voters' knowledge about school board elections next fall, we asked survey participants to indicate how much they know about four current issues in public education and about the information parents receive from school:

- "Please tell me if you know a lot, some, very little, or nothing about ... (school vouchers, charter schools, state lottery to fund schools, new North Carolina student accountability standards that are also known as the no-social-promotion policy) ... and how they work."
- "How much information about the new North Carolina student accountability standards has your oldest child's school given to you? A lot, some, very little, or no information at all?"

Over half of the respondents indicated that they know very little or nothing about vouchers, charter schools, and the no-social-promotion policy. Conversely, over half, 56%, said they know some or a lot about a state lottery to fund schools. These results are similar to the findings of a Gallup poll released in January 2001, in which about half of the respondents said that they had heard or read about charter schools, and half had not. (Education Reform: The Public's Opinion, Gallup News Service, January 24, 2001)

Table 3: Self-Reported Knowledge about Vouchers, Charter Schools, State Lottery to Fund Schools, and New NC Student Accountability Standards

	% Know A Lot	% Know Some	% Know Very Little	% Know Nothing
School vouchers	17	30	24	28
Charter schools	11	32	28	27
State lottery to fund schools	24	32	23	20
New NC student accountability standards that are also known as the no social promotion policy	12	20	23	43

Note: Percentages do not total 100% because of 1-2% Don't Know/Refused responses.

There were no notable differences in the knowledge levels reported among those with school age children, with children in CMS only, and with no school age children, except regarding the new student accountability standards. Seventy percent of respondents with no school age children reported that they know very little or nothing about the no-social-promotion policy, compared to 59% of parents with children in K-12, and 54% of parents with children in CMS specifically. Other demographic differences appear as follows:

- Those with higher incomes and higher education levels tended to report that they are more informed about these issues than their counterparts. For example, 71% of those with no more than a high school education reported very little or no knowledge about vouchers, compared to 24% of those with post-graduate education.
- District 5 consistently reported the highest knowledge levels among the districts.
- African Americans reported that they know less about the issues than whites. For example, 65% said they know very little or nothing about vouchers, compared to 48% of whites.
- Respondents in the 35-54 age group expressed higher knowledge levels than both the younger and older cohorts. On charter schools, for instance, 50% of 35-54 year olds said they know some or a lot, compared to about 40% of the other age groups.

Fifty-eight percent of parents with school age children state that they have received very little or no information from school about the new NC student accountability standards. Thirty-eight percent indicated that they have received a lot or some information, and 6% responded that they don't know or declined to answer. These results are similar across demographic groupings.

Similarly, in a national poll conducted in 1998 by the Washington-based Council for Basic Education, only 53% indicated that their local schools provide parents with enough information about what their children are expected to know ("Parents Ill-Informed About Standards, Poll Finds", Education Week on the Web, October 28, 1998). These data identify an opportunity for schools to evaluate the degree to which the information they provide is not reaching parents or is not read by parents, and to try alternative means of communication.

North Carolina State Testing

North Carolina's new student accountability standards essentially require that students in key "gateway" grades pass the End of Grade tests in reading and math in order to be promoted. The first gateway, in grade 5, takes effect this current school year. The other gateways, in grades 3, 8, and high school graduation, will be phased in over time. The new standards are intended to help assure that schools, including teachers, administrators and students, achieve the outcomes for which schools are funded for the sake of taxpayers, the business community, and the students themselves. Additional information on the new standards may be found in the White Paper published by CMEF in January 2001 entitled, "The New North Carolina Student Accountability Standards."

We asked three questions pertaining to state testing and the new standards. Participants were asked to identify their level of:

- support for "using the North Carolina state tests as a major factor to determine if students have mastered core subjects and can be promoted to the next grade level", and
- agreement with each of the following statements: "The North Carolina state test should determine the content of the curriculum," and, " The curriculum should determine the content of the North Carolina state test."

Nearly half, 46%, expressed strong-support for using the state tests as a major factor in promotion decisions (8-10 on a scale of 1-10), and 63% at least some level of support (6-10). Only 15% expressed strong lack-of-support (1-3). The level of strong-support is steady across all demographic groups. Nationally, there appears to be even stronger support. In the Gallup Poll released last January, 77% of adults nationwide stated that public school students should be required to pass a standardized test in order to be promoted to the next grade.

A higher percentage of respondents somewhat or strongly agrees that the curriculum should determine the content of the NC state test, rather than the test determining the content of the curriculum, 82% compared to 55%. These questions were intended to uncover the level of concern about "teaching to the test", the assertion that course work focuses excessively on preparing students for the test, instead of the test reflecting what is taught in the classroom. As one focus group participant suggested, teaching to the test is like "getting wrapped up in numbers." Other participants added that children need a "context for learning and meaningfulness" and warn about a "testing culture" which could "kill the joy of learning". While respondents recognize the importance of ensuring that the test material is covered in the classroom, a higher percentage prefer that the curriculum drive what is to be covered on the test.

Table 4: Level of Agreement / Disagreement Regarding:

a. The NC state test should determine content of the curriculum

b. The curriculum should determine content of the NC state test

	Test Should Determine Curriculum (%)	Curriculum Should Determine Test (%)
Strongly Agree	24	49
Somewhat Agree	31	33
Somewhat Disagree	18	6
Strongly Disagree	21	5
DK/Refused	6	7

The following seven sections include, in part, the results of questions which ask, first, how important certain positions are personally to the survey participants, and, second, how good a job they think CMS is doing with respect to the same issue. Surveys of this type commonly show higher scores for the importance of a certain issue than for the community's performance on the same issue. Therefore, when comparing scores for importance to scores for performance, it is appropriate to consider how much of a difference exists between the two scores, rather than the fact that performance lags behind importance.

These seven sections highlight demographic variances in the perceptions of importance and performance. Certain groups consistently view the job CMS is doing more favorably than others. These patterns suggest that certain groups may have different expectations or a different reference point than others. Where this is correct, it may signal inequitable distribution of resources historically. Tracking trends by demographic group over time will help to assess whether expectations become more similar as CMS concentrates on distributing resources equitably and measuring results.

In the section which begins on page 33 entitled "Perceptions of Importance versus Performance", the results of all the questions concerning importance and performance are summarized and discussed together. This section also provides graphic comparisons of responses, enabling observations to be made about which issues ought to be more of a priority for CMS than others, based on respondents' views about their importance relative to each other and how good a job CMS is doing on each. Readers may find it helpful to refer to Graphs 10 and 11 while reading about each topic individually in the next seven sections.

Teacher Pay

Survey participants were asked about:

- their level of agreement with: "Teachers should be paid extra when their students perform well on the North Carolina state tests,"
- how important it is to increase teachers' salaries, and
- how good a job CMS is doing to increase teacher salaries.

Sixty-one percent strongly or somewhat agree that teachers should be paid extra when their students perform well on the state tests. Yet, one out of five strongly disagrees. Findings were consistent across most demographic groupings. Responses by district ranged from 50% agreement (District 4) to 64% agreement (Districts 2 and 3). Sixty-nine percent of men expressed agreement, compared to 55% of women. A slightly higher percentage of African Americans were in agreement than whites, 67% compared to 60%.

Table 5: Level of Agreement / Disagreement Regarding: "Teachers should be paid extra when their students perform well on the North Carolina state tests"

	%
Strongly Agree	30
Somewhat Agree	31
Somewhat Disagree	18
Strongly Disagree	19
DK/ Refused	2

More than half of respondents rated increasing teacher salaries "of utmost importance", 10 on a scale of 1-10. Eighty-two percent gave it a rating of high-importance (8-10). Conversely, only 19% gave CMS a high rating (8-10) for the job it is doing to increase teacher salaries.

The high ratings for *importance* for increasing teacher salaries persisted across all demographic groupings. A higher percentage of African Americans provided high-importance ratings than whites, 89% versus 80%. High-*performance* ratings varied across demographic groups:

- Districts 2 and 3 were more complimentary of the job CMS is doing to increase salaries than the other districts, with about 28% high ratings. The other districts ranged from 15% to 18%.
- Respondents who have lived here the longest, are older, have less education, and less household income tend to look upon the job CMS has done to increase salaries more favorably than their counterparts.
- A higher percentage of African Americans provided very favorable (8-10) performance ratings than whites, 28% versus 16%.

Equity and Student Assignment

Survey participants were asked for their views and priorities surrounding several key elements of school equity and student assignment:

- How important is "ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools"?
- How good a job is CMS doing in "ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools"?
- "How much do you support...
  - Ensuring that low-income students are not concentrated in a few schools
  - Ensuring that minority students are not concentrated in a few schools
  - Busing students to achieve racial balance
  - Busing students to achieve balance across low, middle, and high-income students
  - Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it means a number of schools will become racially segregated
  - Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it results in the concentration of low-income children in a few schools."

Seventy-eight percent rated ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools as very important (8-10). More than half, 55%, gave this issue a "10" for importance. Last year's responses of 8-10 totaled 82%, slightly higher still than this year's responses. High-importance ratings were consistently high across all demographic groups. Respondents with higher household incomes and higher education levels tended to view the issue as slightly more important than their counterparts. Equity appears to be very important among both African American and white respondents. A higher percentage of African Americans gave high-importance ratings (8-10) than whites, 84% versus 77%. Only 3% of *both* African Americans and whites rated equity as *not* important (1-3).

Only 17% responded that CMS is doing a very good job at ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools (8-10). This is virtually the same as last year's rate of 18%. The demographic differences among responses followed similar patterns to those regarding teacher salaries.

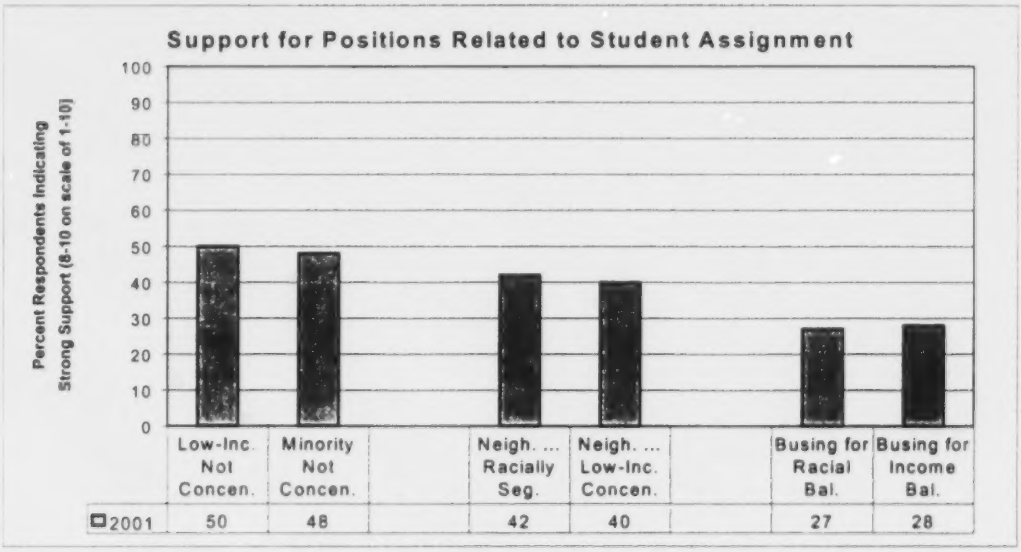
- Districts 2 and 3 were more complimentary of the job that CMS is doing to ensure equity than the other districts, 29% and 24% high ratings, respectively. The other districts ranged from 14% to 17% high ratings.
- Respondents who have lived in Mecklenburg County the longest, who are older, who earn less household income, and have completed less education tended to view CMS's performance more favorably than their counterparts.
- A higher percentage of African Americans gave CMS a high-performance rating (8-10) in ensuring equity than whites, 23% versus 15%. A higher percentage of African Americans than whites also gave CMS *poor* ratings (1-3), 26% versus 19%. African Americans seem to be more polarized on this issue than whites.

While responses to these questions indicate that there is strong community support for the achievement of equity in school facilities and resources, the views about what exactly equity means and *how* to achieve it illustrate the struggle

which this community continues to face. Even in *defining* equity, different interpretations exist. In the focus groups conducted prior to the administration of this survey, participants said that in order to achieve equity, some schools may need more resources than others in order to "provide equal opportunities", e.g., to accommodate children who are "high-risk" or otherwise need extra support.

Survey participants were asked to identify their level of support with several positions related to student assignment. Some of the responses appear to contradict each other, as shown in the following graph.

Graph 7



Half of the respondents *strongly* support ensuring that low-income students and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools (8-10). Support increases to nearly two-thirds when all the supportive responses (6-10) are included.

Assigning children to neighborhood schools, even if it results in the concentration of low-income children in a few schools, or, even if it means a number of schools will become racially segregated, received less support, but still approximately 40% in the "strong-support" group (8-10) and about 58% with all the support responses included (6-10).

The relatively strong support for ensuring that low-income and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools is almost cut in half when the issue of busing is introduced. Just over one-quarter of respondents strongly support busing to achieve racial balance and balance across low, middle, and high-income students.

The distribution of responses varies by demographic group as follows:

- *Not concentrating low-income and minority students*:
  - Districts 2, 3, and 4 expressed the strongest support, 53% to 61% "8-10" ratings, compared to 40% to 48% in the other districts
  - 17% of respondents who have lived here for fewer than five years said they do "*not* at all" support (1 on a scale of 1-10) this position, compared to 7% those who have lived here longer.
- *Neighborhood schools*:
  - A split exists among the districts. For instance, 36% of respondents in Districts 2 and 3, compared to 48% in District 6 strongly support neighborhood schools even if it results in racial segregation
  - Those who are over 55 years old are more in favor of neighborhood schools than the 18-34 year old group.
- *Busing to achieve racial balance:*
  - A higher percentage of respondents with less household income and less education tended to indicate high support (8-10) than their counterparts.
  - Districts 2, 3, and 4 expressed the strongest support for busing to achieve racial balance: 34% to 39% (8-10) compared to 17% to 26% in other districts. Similar distinctions exist by district in support of busing to achieve balance across low, middle, and high-income students.

As shown in Table 6, both white and African American respondents strongly support ensuring that low-income and minority children are not concentrated in a few schools. About two-thirds of African Americans and over 40% of whites strongly support (8-10) these positions. African Americans are more passionate in their support by virtue of 49% and 43% rating their support as "10".

Table 6: Distribution of Levels of Support for:

	Ensuring that *low-income* students are not concentrated in a few schools		**Ensuring that *minority* students are not concentrated in a few schools**	
	White %	**African American** %	**White** %	**African American** %
1- not at all support	9	7	9	8
2	3	<0.5%	2	1
3	3	<0.5%	4	1
4	4	1	3	1
5	14	8	16	9
6	6	4	5	4
7	11	5	13	6
8	16	13	18	11
9	6	6	6	11
10- strongly support	22	49	19	43
DK/Refused	4	6	6	6

Table 7, below, shows that a higher percentage of white respondents strongly support neighborhood schools than African Americans. However, about three out of ten African American respondents do strongly *support* assigning children to neighborhood schools, even if it results in concentrating low-income students in a few schools or in racial segregation.

As was the case in African Americans' bimodal responses to the question about CMS' performance in ensuring equity, here, too, African Americans' responses appear to cluster at both ends of the scale.

- Regarding low-income children, 31% of African Americans strongly support neighborhood schools even if they result in the concentration of low-income children in a few schools (8-10 on scale of 1-10). At the other end of the scale (1-3) is a slightly larger group of African Americans who strongly do *not* support neighborhood schools if they result in the concentration of low-income children in a few schools.
- Regarding racial segregation, 30% of African Americans strongly support neighborhood schools even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated (8-10), but 40% strongly do *not* support such assignments (1-3).

Table 7: Distribution of Levels of Support for:

	Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it results in the concentration of *low-income* children in a few schools		**Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it means a number of schools will become *racially segregated***	
	White %	**African American** %	**White** %	**African American** %
1- not at all support	7	22	8	30
2	4	10	4	8
3	5	3	4	2
4	5	5	4	3
5	15	11	14	12
6	6	8	6	5
7	12	6	10	9
8	15	12	15	12
9	6	2	6	2
10- strongly support	21	17	25	16
DK/Refused	5	3	5	2

When it comes to support for busing, there is no bimodal pattern, as there was for African Americans regarding neighborhood schools. There is a strong racial split. The distribution of responses to busing indicates very *little* support on the part of whites, and very consistent *strong*-support by African Americans. As

Table 8 shows, over 40% of whites strongly do not support busing to achieve income balance (1-3 on scale of 1-10), and 19% do strongly support it (8-10 on 1-10 scale). Only about one in ten African Americans strongly does not support busing (1-3), and at least 60% do strongly support it (8-10).

Table 8: Distribution of Levels of Support for:

	Busing students to achieve balance across low, middle, and high-income students		**Busing to achieve racial balance**	
	White %	**African American %**	**White %**	**African American %**
1- not at all support	27	4	29	7
2	5	1	6	3
3	9	2	7	1
4	6	5	6	2
5	18	11	18	9
6	6	6	7	4
7	7	11	7	8
8	9	19	7	20
9	2	8	1	7
10- strongly support	8	33	7	36
DK/Refused	4	2	4	3

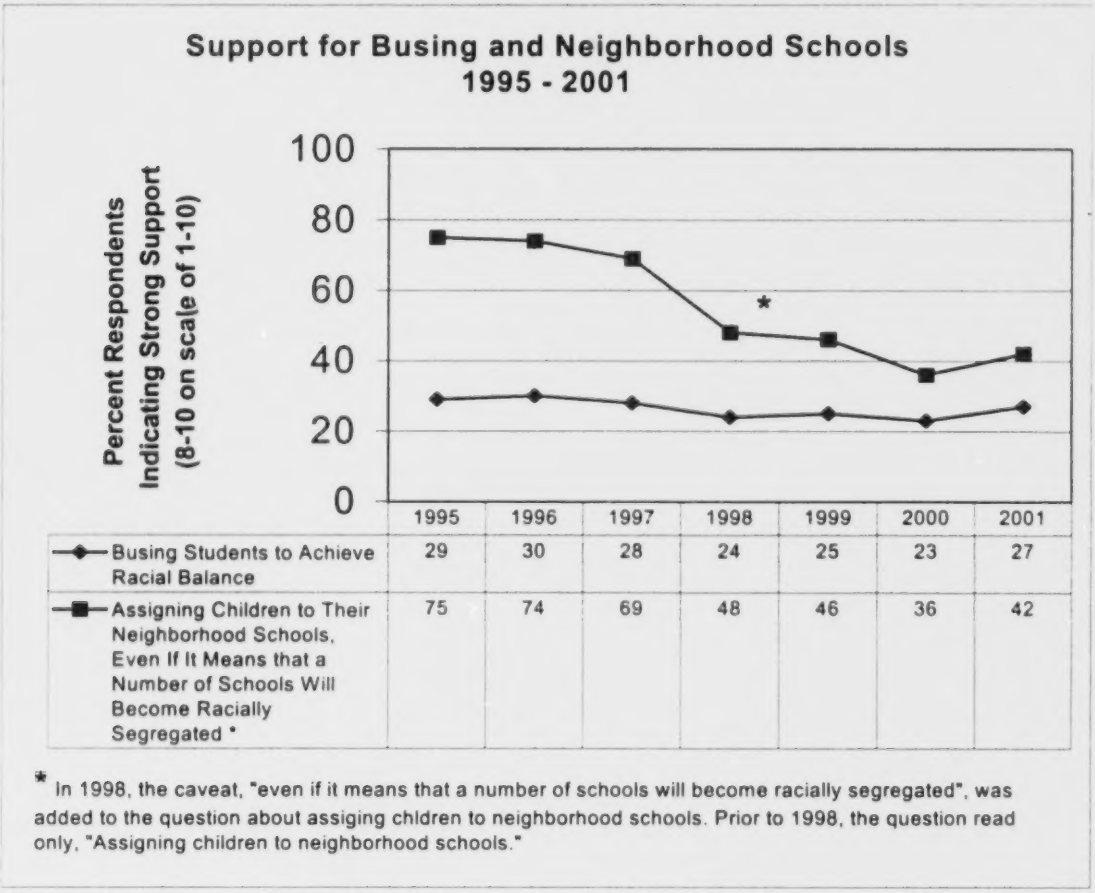
Thus, while both groups demonstrate consistent support for ensuring that low-income and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools, both groups show some support for neighborhood schools. While African-Americans seem more divided on the issue of neighborhood schools than whites, there is no question about their strong support for busing. The racial divide on busing is striking, and will continue to serve as a huge challenge for this community.

The strong-support (8-10) for ensuring that low-income or economically disadvantaged students are not concentrated in a few schools declined from 2000 to 2001 from 56% to 50%. This question, as it relates to low-income children, was not asked prior to 2000. It will take additional years of data to determine if this slight change represents a trend away from public support for integration of low-income children.

Questions regarding racial segregation have been asked since 1995. Graph 8 shows the trends over time in response to two questions, one about support for busing to achieve racial balance, and the other about support for neighborhood

schools (with the addition in 1998 of the words "even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated").

Graph 8



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Busing Students to Achieve Racial Balance	29	30	28	24	25	23	27
Assigning Children to Their Neighborhood Schools, Even If It Means that a Number of Schools Will Become Racially Segregated *	75	74	69	48	46	36	42

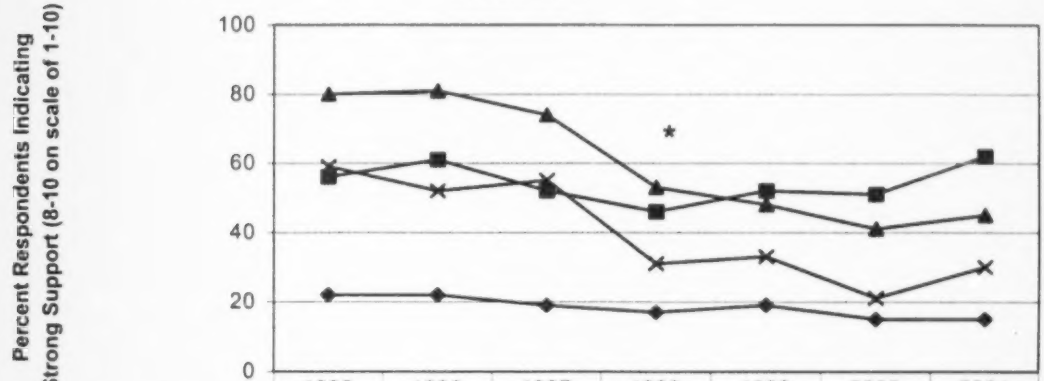
* In 1998, the caveat, "even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated", was added to the question about assiging chldren to neighborhood schools. Prior to 1998, the question read only, "Assigning children to neighborhood schools."

As Graph 8 shows, there has been a *decline* in the percentage of respondents who strongly support neighborhood schools, from 75% in 1995 to 42% in 2001. (The 2001 figure is up from 36% in 2000.) A wording change in 1998, which added, "...even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated" is likely to have contributed to this overall decline, as strong-support dropped about 20 percentage points from 1997 to 1998. There has also been an increase in the percentage that expresses no support at all (1 on a scale of 1-10) for neighborhood schools from 3% in 1995 to 13% in 2001.

The support for busing to achieve racial balance has remained steady over time with 24% to 30% showing strong-support. There was a very slight increase in strong-support for busing in 2001 over the prior three years. There has also consistently been about one-third of respondents who strongly do *not* support busing (1-3 on 1-10 scale).

Graph 9 examines the trends in strong-support *by race* for busing students to achieve racial balance and for assigning students to their neighborhood schools, even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated. This graph shows that the slight increase in strong-support for busing in 2001 consists exclusively of African Americans, from 51% in 2000 to 63% in 2001. Support for neighborhood schools declined for both groups, especially in 1998, with the added wording to this question. However, the slight increase in support for neighborhood schools in 2001 results from *both* whites and African Americans.

Support for Busing and Neighborhood Schools by Race
1995 - 2001



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Busing -W	22	22	19	17	19	15	15
Busing - AA	56	61	52	46	52	51	62
Neigh -W	80	81	74	53	48	41	45
Neigh - AA	59	52	55	31	33	21	30

* In 1998, the caveat, "even if it means that a number of schools will become racially segregated", was added to the question about assigning children to neighborhood schools. Prior to 1998, the question read only, "Assigning children to neighborhood schools".

Graph 9

Building, Renovating and Updating Schools

Expanding the physical capacity of public schools to accommodate the growing number of children in our region requires investment of tremendous resources in a very visible way. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System is also undertaking this effort in order to reduce the inequities among its schools. Regarding building, renovating and updating schools, the *2001 Community Assessment* inquired about:

- the importance of this endeavor
- how good a job CMS is doing, and
- how priorities ought to be set.

Three-quarters of respondents view renovating and updating present schools as very important (8-10 on a scale of 1-10); 46% identified it as of utmost importance (10 on a scale of 1-10). Building new schools also garnered high-importance ratings, but not quite as large a percentage. Fifty-seven percent rated building new schools as very important (8-10), and 28% identified this as of utmost importance (10 on a scale of 1-10). These ratings are nearly identical to those of last year.

About 80% of respondents in Districts 2, 3, and 4 rated *renovating and updating* schools as very important (8-10), compared to 70% to 75% in the other districts. With respect to *building new* schools, nearly half (48%) in District 5 gave a rating of "very important" (8-10), compared to the other districts at 54% to 64%. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents without school age children gave high-importance ratings than respondents with children in CMS, 55% versus 66% for building new schools, and 75% versus 80% for renovating and updating existing schools.

A higher percentage of African Americans gave high-importance ratings than whites, as shown in Table 9, below. But large percentages from both races gave high-importance ratings (8-10) to both items:

- *Building new schools*: whites 54% and African Americans 69%
- *Renovating and updating existing schools:* whites 71% and African Americans 87%.

African-Americans gave a particularly high percentage of "10's", 40% for building and 68% for renovating/updating.

Table 9: Distribution of Levels of Importance Regarding:

	Renovating / updating present schools		Building new schools	
	White %	African American %	White %	African American %
1 – not at all important	1	<0.5%	2	2
2	<0.5%	1	1	1
3	1	1	2	2
4	1	1	3	4
5	6	3	10	11
6	4	2	9	5
7	14	4	15	6
8	22	8	21	23
9	10	10	9	7
10 – utmost importance	39	68	24	40
DK/Refused	2	1	3	<0.5%

When it comes to how good a job respondents think CMS is doing, 31% gave CMS high scores (8-10) for building new schools and 21% gave CMS high scores for renovating and updating existing schools. While respondents believe that renovating/updating is more important, they think that CMS is doing a better job building new schools than renovating/updating.

- The highest ratings came from Districts 2 and 3:
  - about 44% for building new, compared to 24% to 37% in the other districts
  - about 28% for renovating/updating, compared to 15% to 22% in the other districts.
- For parents with children in CMS:
  - 38% think a very good job (8-10) of *building new* schools is being done versus 31% of respondents with no school-age children
  - 26% think a very good job of *renovating/updating* is being done versus 21% of those with no school-age children.
- Regarding those who have lived in Mecklenburg County over 20 years:
  - 35% think CMS is doing a very good job of *building new* schools compared to 18% of those who have lived here for fewer than five years
  - 26% think CMS is doing a very good job of *renovating/updating* compared to 15% of those who have lived here for fewer than five years
- The percentage of African Americans giving high-performance ratings (8-10) was twice that of whites for *building new*, 49% versus 25%. Nearly one in four (23%) gave it a "10". For *renovating/updating*, 28% of African Americans gave high-performance ratings, compared to 18% of whites.
- Respondents with less education and less household income tend to be more complimentary of CMS's performance than those with higher education and higher incomes. For *building new*:
  - 41% with less than a high school education gave very good ratings compared to 26% by those with post-graduate education
  - 39% with less than $30,000 household income gave very good ratings, compared to 27% by those with incomes in excess of $60,000.

  For *renovating/updating*:
  - 34% with less than a high school education gave very good ratings, compared to 14% of those with post-graduate education
  - 31% with less than $30,000 income gave very good ratings, compared to 16% with incomes over $60,000.

Table 10: Priorities Between Pairs of Issues Regarding Building New Schools and Renovating/Updating Present Schools

a. Building new schools *or* renovating/updating present schools

	%
Build new	14
Renovate / update	46
Exactly equal	36
Depends (voluntary)	2
DK/Refused	2

b. Building new schools in the inner city *or* in the suburbs

	%
Inner city	30
Suburbs	19
Exactly equal	43
Depends (voluntary)	3
DK/Refused	5

c. Renovating/updating present schools in the inner city *or* in the suburbs

	%
Inner city	42
Suburbs	9
Exactly equal	44
Depends (voluntary)	1
DK/Refused	5

Table 10 summarizes the responses of survey participants, when given three pairs of issues and asked to identify the higher priority between each pair. First, between building new schools or renovating/updating present schools, 46% chose renovating/updating as the priority, 14% chose building new schools, and 36% said they are exactly equal priorities. Only in District 6 did this ranking differ slightly, where 42% identified the choices as exactly equal, 41% said renovating/updating is the priority, and 13% said building new is the priority.

Second, between building new schools in the *inner city* or in the *suburbs*, 43% identified the choices as exactly equal, 30% set new schools in the inner city as the priority, and 19% identified new schools in the suburbs as the priority. African Americans and Districts 3 and 4 selected building new schools in the inner city as more of a priority than in the suburbs. The percentage of African Americans selecting the inner city as the priority was twice that of whites, 52% versus 24%.

For the third choice, renovating/updating present schools in the inner city versus renovating/updating present schools in the suburbs, 44% identified them as

exactly equal, 42% chose the inner city as the priority, and only 9% chose the suburbs. Fifty-two percent of African Americans chose the inner city, compared to 38% of whites.

While renovating/updating present schools appears to be more important and more of a priority than building new schools, the degree of support predictably varies according to the interests of the respondents. Still, in all districts, the priority-setting suggested a community-wide awareness of the condition of schools in the inner city relative to the suburbs, resulting in more support for building new *and* renovating/updating in the inner city than the suburbs.

Technology in Schools

Progress on the part of CMS in providing more computers and high-tech resources for students is another way of assessing school quality and equity. Survey participants were asked to rate both the importance of this issue and the performance of CMS in achieving this end.

Seventy-one percent gave the issue of providing more computers and high-tech resources for students a high-importance rating (8-10), and only 3% gave it a low-importance rating (1-3). Last year, 72% gave it a high-importance rating. Over 80% of respondents in Districts 2 and 3 gave this issue high-importance ratings, compared to 62% to 73% in other districts. African Americans identified this issue as more important than whites; 91% of African Americans rated it as very important (8-10), compared to 66% of whites.

Twenty-four percent rated the job that CMS is doing of providing more computers and high-tech resources to students as very good (8-10), virtually the same as last year's rate of 25%. Only 8% of respondents think CMS is doing a poor job providing more high-tech and computers for students.

Perceptions of performance differ by demographic grouping. For example,

- The largest percentage of high-performance (8-10) ratings came from respondents in Districts 2 and 3, about 37%, compared to 14% in District 5.
- Of those who have lived in Mecklenburg County for over 20 years, 29% rated performance very high (8-10), compared to17% for those who have lived here less than five years.
- African Americans were very complimentary almost twice as often as whites, 35% 8-10's, compared to 20% for whites.
- Respondents with less education or less household income gave higher ratings than their counterparts: 38% 8-10's by those with less than a high school education versus 17% for those with post-graduate work, and 41% 8-10's by those with incomes of less than $30,000 versus 16% for those earning more than $60,000.

Safety in Schools

Out of several questions asked regarding perceptions of importance and performance, "making students and teachers feel safe at school" received the largest percentage of very high-importance and very high-performance ratings. Ninety-two percent rated school safety as very important (8-10), exactly the same percentage as last year. Seventy-six percent indicated that it is of utmost importance (10). Only 3% gave it a "5" or less on the 1-10 scale.

While variations in the "8-10" ratings by demographic group are small, there are a few groups for which the percentage of "10" ratings is especially high compared to their counterparts:

- 89% for African Americans, 72% for whites
- 85% for District 3, 69% for District 5, with the other districts between the two
- 82% for those with a high school degree or less, compared to 71% to 78% in the groups with more education
- 86% for those earning less than $30,000 income, compared to 70% to 77% in the higher income groups.

With respect to how well CMS is making students and teachers feel safe at school, 36% gave a very high rating (8-10), compared to last year's similar rate of 34%. Only 9% rated performance as poor (1-3). The following groups differed notably in the percentage that gave "10" as the score for performance:

- About one-quarter of African Americans, compared to about one in ten whites
- About one-quarter of respondents from Districts 2 and 3, compared to 7% to 17% in the other districts
- 28% of those with a high school education or less, compared to 8% to 15% in the groups with more education
- 28% of those with household incomes of less than $30,000, compared to 11% to 16% in the higher income groups.

Reducing the Drop-Out Rate

CMS reports in its District Profile that its drop-out rate is higher than that of the state as a whole. About 28% of students entering the 9th grade in the school year 1996 -1997 dropped out before graduation. This fact underscores the importance of CMS and community efforts to keep students in school.

Eighty-one percent of respondents hold reducing the drop-out rate as very important (8-10), the same as last year. These results are steady across demographic groupings, with a slightly higher percentage of African Americans (88%) giving high ratings to importance than whites (79%).

Nineteen percent gave CMS high ratings (8-10) for the job it is doing to reduce the drop-out rate. Last year, 18% rated performance as high. Similar to the pattern present in other questions, whites are more critical than African Americans, with 16% of whites and 27% of African Americans giving performance a score of 8-10. Districts 2 and 3, those who have lived in Mecklenburg County for over 20 years, those with less than a high school education and those who earn less than $30,000 tended to rate performance

higher than their counterparts. For example, 30% of respondents in District 2 and 26% of respondents in District 3 provided high ratings (8-10), compared to about 14% in Districts 4 and 6.

Preparing Students for the Workplace versus College

Discussion within the community about where CMS ought to place its efforts in terms of preparing students for pursuits after graduation prompted the *2001 Community Assessment* to ask about:

- The *importance* of preparing students to "enter the workplace", "enter a four-year college or university", and "enter a vocational program or community college" directly after high school.
- How good a job CMS is doing to prepare students for each of the three endeavors listed above.
- Whether preparing students to enter the workplace *or* a four-year college or university directly after high school ought to be the greater priority.

Table 11 shows that preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school received more "high-importance" ratings (8-10) than preparing students to enter a vocational program/community college or the workplace.

Table 11: Importance versus Performance Regarding Preparation of Students for Endeavors Directly after High School

	% High *Importance* (8-10 on scale of 1-10)	% High *Performance* (8-10 on scale of 1-10)
Preparing students for four-year college or university	82	28
Preparing students for vocational program or community college	78	22
Preparing students for the workplace	66	17

Respondents also rate the job CMS is doing to prepare students for pursuits after high school in the same order as they do importance. Twenty-eight percent think CMS is doing a very good job of preparing students for four-year college or university, compared to 22% for vocational program or community college, and 17% for the workplace.

The Community Assessment has inquired about perceptions of importance regarding preparing students for the workplace since 1995. However, the wording of this question has changed in several ways over the years, preventing a just comparison of responses over time. For example, last year, the question asked about the importance of "providing workplace skills in the schools". This year, the question asked about the importance of "preparing students to enter the

workplace directly after high school". Thus, attempts to examine trends in the perceptions of importance regarding preparation for the workplace need to be postponed until the wording of this question remains the same from year to year.

Regarding perceptions of *importance*, the following demographic observations are noteworthy:

- A higher percentage of District 2 and 3 respondents rated *all three* pursuits as very important (8-10) than those in the other districts. All districts rated preparation for the workplace directly after high school as less important than the other two pursuits.
- Those who have lived in Mecklenburg County over 20 years tended to rate university as slightly *less* important, and vocational programs and workplace as slightly *more* important than those who have lived here for less than five years.
- A higher percentage of African Americans rated *all three* pursuits as very important (8-10) than whites. Over 70% of African Americans rated preparing students to enter four-year college or university directly after high school as of *utmost importance* (10), compared to 44% of whites.
- A slightly higher percentage of those in the18-34 year-old group gave high-importance ratings for preparation for *university* than those in the older age groups. Eighty-seven percent of 18-34 year-olds rated preparation for university as very important (8-10), compared to 81% of 35-54 year-olds and 77% of those over 55.

With respect to how *good a job* registered voters think CMS is doing to prepare students for pursuits after graduation, demographic groups differed as follows:

- A higher percentage of District 2 respondents provided scores of 8-10 for *all three* pursuits than their counterparts in other districts. For example, 41% of District 2 gave high-performance ratings for preparing students to enter university, compared to a range of 20% to 29% in the other districts. Further, in District 2, 17% rated performance in preparing students to enter university a "10", compared to only 4% in District 5.
- Those who have children in CMS tend also to view all three items slightly more favorably that those who have no school age children. For example, 34% rated preparation for university as very good (8-10), compared to 27% of those without school age children.
- African Americans' views on the job CMS is doing to prepare students for all three pursuits is more favorable than whites'. Both groups believe that CMS is doing a better job preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school, than a vocational program or community college, or the workplace.
- A larger percentage of older respondents, those who have lived in Mecklenburg County the longest, those with less education, and those with less household income gave high-performance ratings to all three items than their counterparts. For instance, 36% of those with incomes of less than $30,000 gave high-performance ratings for preparation for vocational program/community college versus 16% of those with incomes over $60,000.

In another question, summarized in Table 12, survey participants were asked to identify what they think ought to be more of a priority: preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school *or* preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school.

Table 12: Priorities Identified Between Preparing Students to Enter the Workplace *Or* Four-Year College / University Directly after High School

	%
Workplace directly after high school	13
4-year college/university directly after high school	40
Exactly equal	43
Depends (voluntary)	2
DK/Refused	3

The most frequent response was that they are both exactly equal, although more people believe that college/university is more of a priority than preparing students to enter the workplace. Responses were similar by race, with African Americans setting college/university as the priority by a slightly higher percentage than whites, 44% versus 39%. The biggest demographic difference was by age, with 27% of those over 55 indicating college/university as the priority, compared to 57% of those 18-34 years old.

Preparation for college or university is clearly viewed as a priority over preparation for the workplace. Yet, only about 60% of CMS high school graduates say they plan to attend a four-year college. This preference for CMS to focus on preparation for higher education over the workplace may reflect the community's desire that all students be challenged to attain a higher education or at least achieve the standards necessary for a higher education. Many jobs that do not require a college education do require what used to be college-level skills. The minimum that a student needs to know has greatly expanded over time.

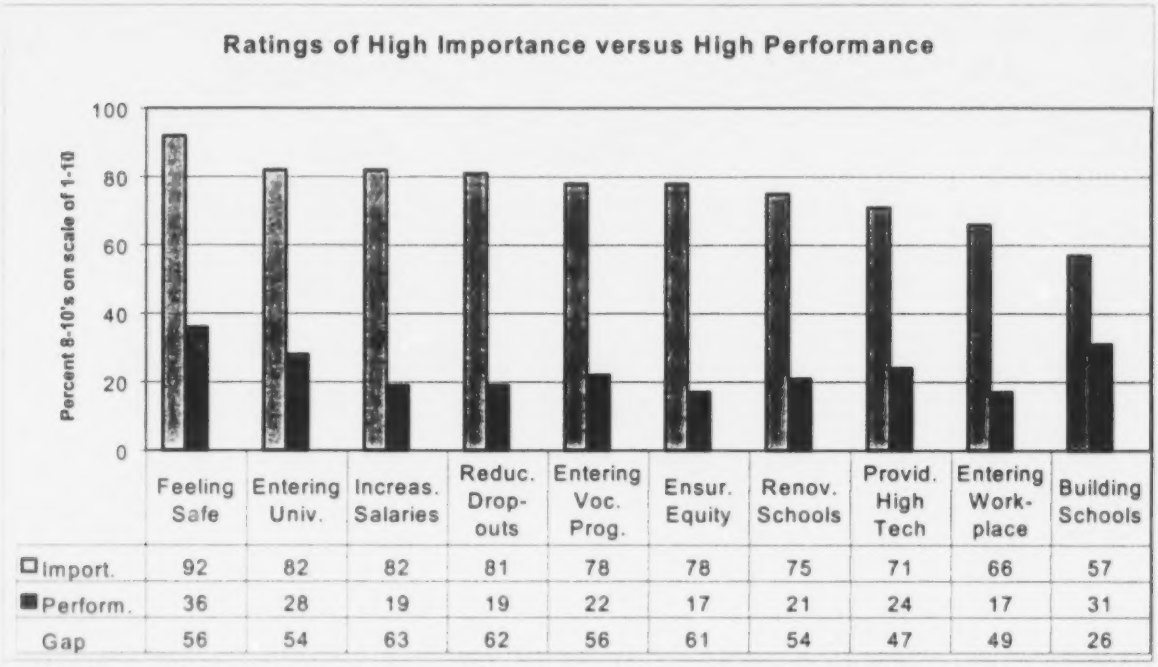
Additionally, when voters were asked what kind of a job CMS is doing, preparing students directly for the workplace and for a vocational program or community college ranked lower than preparing students to enter a four-year college or university. CMS needs to excel at all three endeavors.

Perceptions of Importance versus Performance

The prior seven sections presented perceptions of importance and performance by individual topic. This section presents together all of the issues about which importance and performance were asked, and compares the gaps between perceptions of importance and performance for each.

The ratings of importance and performance have been presented according to the percentage of high ratings for each, 8-10 on a scale of 1-10. Graph 10 uses this format to display all of the issues about which importance and performance were asked, in descending order of importance.

Graph 10



	Feeling Safe	Entering Univ.	Increas. Salaries	Reduc. Drop-outs	Entering Voc. Prog.	Ensur. Equity	Renov. Schools	Provid. High Tech	Entering Work-place	Building Schools
Import.	92	82	82	81	78	78	75	71	66	57
Perform.	36	28	19	19	22	17	21	24	17	31
Gap	56	54	63	62	56	61	54	47	49	26

The three largest gaps between high-importance and high-performance are for increasing teacher salaries (63%), reducing the drop-out rate (62%), and ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools (61%). The smallest gap is for building new schools, 26%. Interestingly, however, this issue received the smallest overall percentage of high-importance ratings.

Another way to look at perceptions of importance and performance is by the average or mean scores given for each issue on the 1-10 scale. Table 13 presents the mean scores given to each issue for importance and performance.

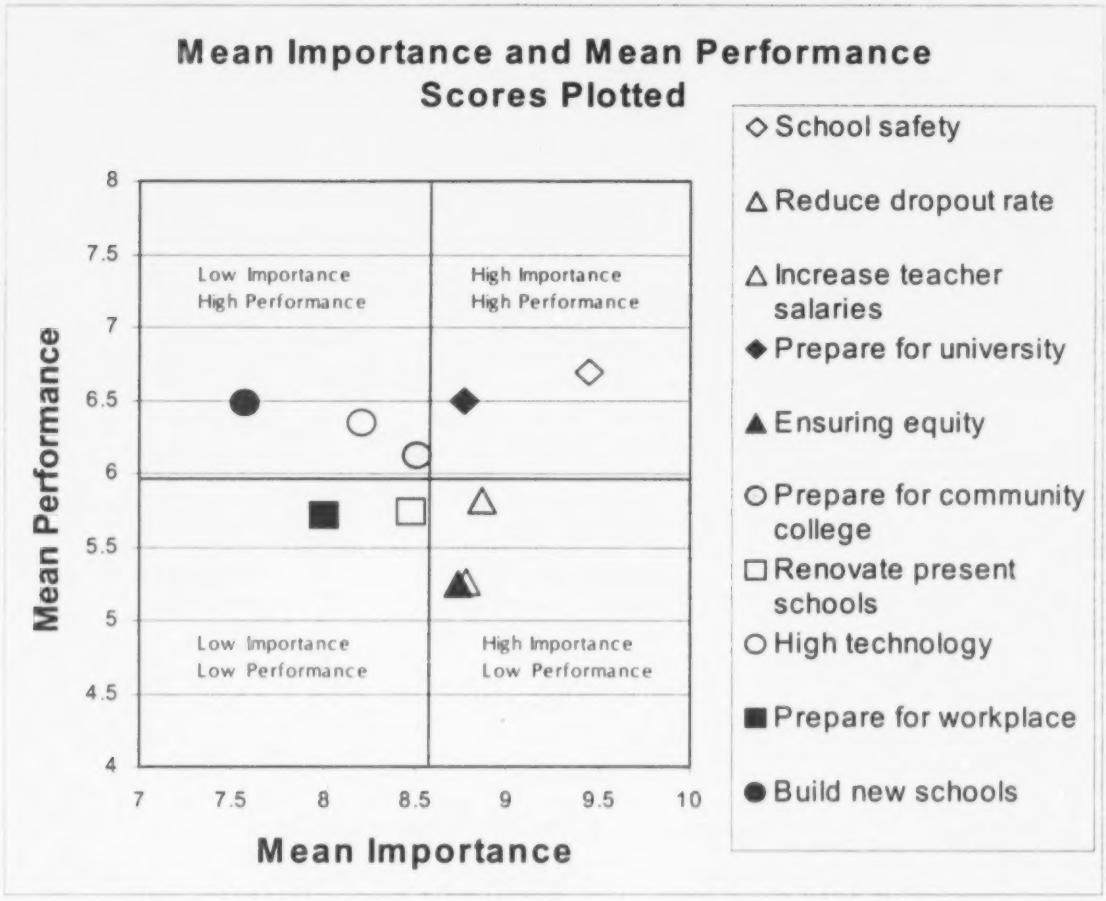
Table 13: Mean Scores Given for Importance and Performance

	Importance	Performance	Gap
Making teachers and students feel safe at school	9.45	6.69	2.76
Reducing the dropout rate	8.87	5.81	3.06
Increasing teachers' salaries	8.78	5.26	3.52
Preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school	8.77	6.49	2.28
Ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools	8.74	5.25	3.49
Preparing students to enter a vocational program or community college directly after high school	8.51	6.12	2.39
Renovating and updating present schools	8.48	5.74	2.74
Providing more computers and high tech resources for students	8.21	6.35	1.86
Preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school	8.00	5.72	2.28
Building new schools	7.57	6.48	1.09

Sorting the issues by order of importance using mean scores produces a slightly different result than sorting by the percentage rating importance ratings. However, either way, school safety is the most important, and building new schools is the least important, although *all* items earned an importance score of over 7.5 out of 10. It should also be pointed out that respondents were not asked to rate these issues in relation to each other. For example, every issue could have received the same score as the next. In addition, the three issues for which there is the largest gap between importance and performance when comparing the percentage of 8-10's given are the same ones as when comparing mean scores: increasing teachers' salaries, ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools, and reducing the drop-out rate.

Graph 11 plots the mean scores using two axes: mean importance score on the x-axis and mean performance score on the y-axis. This format allows the perceptions of importance and performance to be observed in relation to each other, and is called a quadrant analysis.

Graph 11



The intersecting lines drawn on the graph indicate the average or mean among the mean scores for each issue. The mean score for importance among all the issues is 8.54, and that is where the vertical line appears on the x-axis. The mean score for performance among all the issues is 5.99, the point at which the horizontal line is drawn on the y-axis. By considering these issues in relation to each other, one can identify the issues of relative high-importance and high-performance by looking at the top right-hand side quadrant. Those are the items that received mean scores for *both* importance and performance that *exceed* the overall mean scores. Likewise, the items that appear in the lower left-hand quadrant received both importance and performance rating *less* than the overall mean scores.

It is important to remember, however, that the terms "high" and "low" importance and performance in this context refer only to the relationship of the issues to one another, and do not necessarily reflect the respondents' judgments about each issue individually. The lowest mean score for importance was over 7.5, indicating that *all* the issues are viewed as important. The *lowest* mean for performance was over 5.2. Therefore, the terms "high" and "low" in the quadrant analysis are used to reflect the *perceptions* of the issues in *relation to* each other, not to denote their absolute position.

This being said, Graph 11 divides each of the ten issues included into one of four quadrants to facilitate their examination relative to each other.

- *High-importance / high-performance (According to respondents, the issue matters a great deal and the schools are doing a relatively good job of handling it.):* The two issues that received mean scores for both importance and performance higher than the average among all the mean scores are "making teachers and students feel safe at school" and "preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school". What the poll says is "hold the gains."
- *High-importance / low-performance (The issue matters a great deal, but the schools are <u>not</u> doing a particularly good job of handling it):* The three issues with relatively high mean-importance scores, but relatively low-performance scores are "reducing the drop-out rate", "increasing teachers' salaries", and "ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools". What the poll says is "work on this."
- *Low-importance / low-performance (The schools are not doing a particularly good job with this, but the issue does not matter as much as others.):* The two issues receiving mean scores lower than the average for both importance and performance are "renovating and updating present schools", and "preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school". What the poll says is "work on other more important issues first."
- *Low-importance / high-performance (The schools are doing a relatively good job of handling this, but the issue does not matter as much as others):* "Preparing students to enter a vocational program or community college directly after high school", "providing more computers and high-tech resources for students", and "building new schools" are the three issues in this quadrant. The poll says, "Hold these gains, but new resources should go to issues of higher importance."

The quadrant analysis is a useful tool for sorting out public opinion. But we would offer three caveats before any priorities are set.

- First, public opinion is not the same thing as wisdom; wise leaders sometimes have to change public opinion rather than follow it.
- Second, the lines are simply drawn along the average values on each axis. Everything to the left of the "importance" line was still viewed as important by respondents, just to a lesser degree.
- Third, large differences are more meaningful than small ones. The public clearly sees a difference in importance between ensuring safety in schools

and building new ones. The differences are much less noteworthy for the issues in the middle.

The application of any priorities also needs to take into consideration the specific needs of individual districts and schools. What might appear in the low-importance quadrants for respondents as a whole could be extremely important to specific groups, and, therefore, merit special attention in that area. For example, providing more computers and high-tech resources for students received a mean importance score of 8.21, and 71% gave it a rating of 8-10 for importance. However, an especially large percentage of respondents in Districts 2 and 3 gave it a high-importance score, a mean of about 8.8, and approximately 80% rated it 8-10 for high-importance. In fact, 60% of District 3 respondents gave it a "10", compared to only 28% in District 5. In one district it might not matter as much if schools provide computers because students have them at home, and the PTAs can raise money for needs not met by CMS. In another district, fewer students may have computers at home; if the schools don't have them, the students aren't exposed to them. That can apply to computers or field trips or good teachers.

Taxes

A community's willingness to increase its taxes to fund an important interest is a telling indication of its level of true commitment. "Not raising taxes" was one of the five issues from which survey participants were asked to identify the most important issue. While 52% said "improving public schools" is the most important issue, only 11% identified "not raising taxes" as most important.

Registered voters were also asked to rate their level of support on a scale of 1-10 for "Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners increasing taxes to fund schools". Thirty-seven percent strongly support (8-10) this position, and 57% weighed in on the favorable side of the scale (6-10). Over one-third of respondents with no school age children strongly support raising taxes to fund schools, with 56% expressing support on the favorable side of the scale (6-10). Just 21% said they strongly do *not* support (1-3) increasing taxes to fund schools.

Conclusion

The fact that Mecklenburg County's registered voters continue to hold improvement of its schools as the *most* important local issue is one of our community's strengths. Strong commitment to public schools exists whether or not voters have school age children. While satisfaction with school quality has not advanced in recent years, voters do view Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools more favorably than they do North Carolina schools as a whole.

It may be true that perception lags behind reality. Improvements in the schools have not yet translated into more favorable perceptions of quality. As progress is made on quality, it is possible that the expectations of voters as a group are increasing as well.

The desire for better schools, seen in the approval of bonds as well as in responses to survey questions, represents an opportunity for positive change. CMS and community leaders ought to capitalize on the fact that our public schools have captured local interest by:

- finding new ways to assure public awareness on key issues
- implementing initiatives that recognize our county's large size and diversity
- accelerating action in areas of common interest.

Survey results show clearly that there is room for improvement when it comes to voters' knowledge about issues affecting the public schools, namely vouchers, charter schools, state lottery to fund schools, the new student accountability standards, and next fall's school board elections. Improved public awareness on issues could produce higher voter confidence in leaders' abilities to make good decisions concerning the schools.

Differences in the responses among demographic groups illustrate the diversity *among* and *within* individual schools. Every school is required to deal with multiple audiences. What works at one school might not work at another, and what works for some students might not work for others at the same school. A responsive public needs to be sensitive to the difficulty in satisfying everyone *and* to the need for creativity and flexibility in implementing improvements.

Finally, while appreciating differences is important, so too is capitalizing on those issues where voters are aligned in their views. For example, the strong support of both whites and African Americans for ensuring that low-income and minority students are not concentrated in a few schools represents common ground for voters. While the means to achieve these ends produces disagreement among some, the shared commitment of about 65% of our community on this issue is a strength on which creativity and flexibility can build.

Appendix A

Profile of Focus Group Participants

Focus Group	# Attending	Gender	Age	Race	School District	Children Enrolled in C-M Public Schools
1	10	F = 5 M = 5	35-44 = 6 45-54 = 4	All White	All 6 districts represented	Yes
2	9	F = 7 M = 2	25-34 = 2 35-44 = 4 45-54 = 3	All Black	All 6 districts represented	Yes
3	8	F = 4 M = 4	35-44 = 5 45-54 = 2 55-70 = 1	White = 6 Black = 2	All 6 districts represented	No

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire

ID # _____	**JOB # 678**	DATE: _____
REP # _____	DRAFT 9	START TIME: _____
PAGE # _____	3/5/01	END TIME: _____
PHONE # _____	EDITOR: _____	MINUTES: _____
	VERIFIED: _____	INTERVIEWER # _____
DISTRICT: 1 2 3 4 5 6	SEX: M - 1 / F - 2 ZIPCODE	

2001 CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG EDUCATION FOUNDATION STUDY
KPC RESEARCH, P.O. BOX 35334, CHARLOTTE, N.C. 28235-5334

"Hello. I am _____ with KPC Research. We are doing a survey about community issues in Mecklenburg County. Let me assure you we are not selling anything. Is this **(VERIFY PHONE NUMBER? IF NO, TERMINATE INTERVIEW)**. And is this household located on **(STREET NAME ON SAMPLE. IF NO, TERMINATE INTERVIEW. RECORD AS TE1)**. May I speak to . . . .

(USE THE HIGHLIGHTED RESPONDENT SELECTION)

A: May I speak to the **youngest man** currently living in this household who is **a registered voter**? **IF NO MALE REG VOTERS LIVE IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK AA**	AA. May I speak to the **youngest woman** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **[ ] CHECK**
B: May I speak to the **oldest man** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **IF NO MALE REG VOTERS LIVE IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK BB**	BB. May I speak to the **oldest woman** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **[ ] CHECK**
C: May I speak to the **oldest woman** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **IF NO FEMALE REG VOTERS LIVE IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK CC**	CC. May I speak to the **oldest man** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **[ ] CHECK**
D: May I speak to the **youngest woman** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **IF NO FEMALE REG VOTERS LIVE IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK DD**	DD. May I speak to the **youngest man** currently living in this household who is a **registered voter**? **[ ] CHECK**

IF NO REGISTERED VOTERS IN HOUSEHOLD TERMINATE INTERVIEW AND RECORD AS TE2.

(IF DIFFERENT PERSON, REINTRODUCE) As I said, we want to ask a few questions about community issues in Mecklenburg County. We are not expecting you to have an answer for all our questions, so please feel free to let me know when that is the case. Because I don't want to take a lot of your time, we will move quickly through this survey.

1. I'd like you to rank the following five issues in terms of how important each issue is to Mecklenburg County. The five issues are: Improving transportation, including road repair, construction and public transportation; investing in the development of the center city, including entertainment, housing and business; preventing crime; improving public schools; and not raising taxes. Which issue do you feel is the most important: Improving transportation; investing in the development of the center city, including entertainment, housing and business; preventing crime; improving public schools; OR not raising taxes. **(ROTATE LIST)**

Which is the second most important?

(CODE 1 FOR MOST IMPORTANT, 2 FOR SECOND MOST)

Improving transportation, including road repair, construction, and public transportation ..... _____

Investing in the development of the center city, including entertainment, housing and business ..... _____

Preventing crime ..... _____

Improving public schools ..... _____

Not raising taxes ..... _____

ALL SHOULD RECEIVE THE SAME 6

DON'T KNOW/REFUSED 7

---

2. How many years have you lived in Mecklenburg County?

YEARS: _____
LESS THAN ONE YEAR 00
DK/REFUSED 99

IF Q2 >=2 YEARS ASK Q3. ELSE GO TO Q7.

3. Would you say the overall quality of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School System is better, worse or about the same as it was two years ago?

BETTER 1
WORSE 2
ABOUT SAME 3
DK/REFUSED 4

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7. Are you the parent or guardian of any children in grades K through 12 who are currently enrolled in **(READ LIST)**

	YES	NO	DK/REF
a) Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system	1	2	3
b) Private or religious school	1	2	3
c) A charter school	1	2	3
d) Home schooled	1	2	3

(IF NO TO ALL – GO TO Q12)

ASK IF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN MULTIPLE TYPES OF SCHOOLS.

8. Because we will be asking about your oldest child's school, is your oldest child currently enrolled in . . . **(READ LIST)**.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School 1
Private or religious school 2
Charter School 3
or home schooled 4
DK/REFUSED 5

---

9. On the whole, are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with your child's or children's education who are enrolled in . . . **(READ LIST)**

	VERY SATIS	SOME SAT	SOME DISSAT	VERY DISSAT	DK/ REF
ASK Q9A IF Q7A=1.					
A) Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school	1	2	3	4	5
ASK Q9B IF Q7B=1.					
B) A private or religious school	1	2	3	4	5

ASK EVERYONE.

12. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much confidence do you have in these individuals' ability to make good decisions about public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. A "1" means you . have no confidence at all and "10" means you have **complete** confidence. Let "2" through "9" represent your in-between feelings. How about local . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	NO CONF									COMPLETE CONF	DK/ REF
a) Principals	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
b) Teachers	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
c) Board of education	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
d) Organizations for the improvement of education	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
e) Parents	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
f) Superintendent of schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
g) Board of county commissioners	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11

13. Thinking about the school board, do you personally feel your district school board representative should represent the best interests of your district or the best interests of the entire county?

YOUR DISTRICT 1
ENTIRE COUNTY 2
BOTH 3
DK/REFUSED 4

38 To your knowledge, in the fall of this year are the district school board representatives up for re-election, the at-large school board representatives up for re-election, both district and at-large school board representatives up for re-election, or are no school board representatives up for re-election this fall?

DISTRICT 1
AT-LARGE 2
BOTH DISTRICT & AT-LARGE 3
NO REPRESENTATIVES 4
DK/REFUSED 5

15. On a 1-to-10 scale, how important are each of the following positions to you personally. A "1" means **not at all** important and a "10" means of **utmost** importance. You can choose any number in between. How about . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	NOT AT ALL IMP									UTMOST IMP	DK/ REF
a) Increasing teachers' salaries	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
b) Providing more computers and high tech resources for students	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
c) Building new schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
d) Renovating and updating present schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
j) Ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
n) Reducing the drop-out rate	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
p) Making students and teachers feel safe at school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
q) Preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
r) Preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
s) Preparing students to enter a vocational program or community college directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11

---

16. On a 1-to-10 scale, how much do you support each of the following positions. A "1" means you do **not at all** support that position and a "10" means you **strongly** support it. You can choose any number in between. How about . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	NOT AT ALL SUPPORT									STRONGLY SUPPORT	DK/ REF
a) Ensuring that low income students are not concentrated in a few schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
b) Ensuring that minority students are not concentrated in a few schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
c) Busing students to achieve racial balance	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
d) Busing students to achieve balance across low, middle and high income students	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
e) Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it means a number of schools will become racially segregated	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
f) Assigning children to their neighborhood schools, even if it results in the concentration of low income children in a few schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
g) Using the North Carolina state tests as a major factor to determine if students have mastered core subjects and can be promoted to the next grade level	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
h) Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners increasing taxes to fund public schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11

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37. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with

each of the following statements. **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	STRONG AGREE				STRONG DISAGREE	DK/ REF
a) Teachers should be paid extra when their students perform well on the North Carolina state tests	1	2	3	4		5
d) The North Carolina state test should determine the content of the curriculum	1	2	3	4		5
e) The curriculum should determine the content of the North Carolina state test	1	2	3	4		5

---

18. Please tell me if you know a lot, some, very little, or nothing about the following and how they work. How about . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	A LOT	SOME	VERY LITTLE	NOTHING	DK/ REF
a) School vouchers	1	2	3	4	5
b) Charter schools	1	2	3	4	5
c) State lottery to fund schools	1	2	3	4	5
d) New North Carolina student accountability standards that are also known as the no social promotion policy	1	2	3	4	5

ASK Q20 IF PARENT OF CHILD IN SCHOOL

20. How much information about the new North Carolina student accountability standards has your oldest child's school given to you? A lot, some, very little, or no information at all?

A LOT 1
SOME 2
VERY LITTLE 3
NO INFORMATION 4
DK/REF 5

---

21. Please rate the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in the following areas. We'll use a scale of 1 to 10, where "1" means the schools are doing a **poor** job and "10" means they are doing a **great** job. You may use any number in between. How about . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	POOR JOB									GREAT JOB	DK/ REF
a) Increasing teachers' salaries	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
b) Providing more computers and high tech resources for students	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
c) Building new schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
d) Renovating and updating present schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
i) Ensuring equity of facilities and resources among the schools	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
m) Reducing the drop-out rate	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
o) Making students and teachers feel safe at school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
q) Preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
r) Preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
s) Preparing students to enter a vocational program or community college directly after high school	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11

---

39. All of the following are very important issues currently facing Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. For each of the following pairs of issues, please tell me which of the two you feel is the higher priority, or please tell me if you feel that the two issues are exactly equal priorities. **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

a) Building new schools or renovating and updating present schools.

BUILDING NEW SCHOOLS 1
RENOVATING/UPDATING 2
EXACTLY EQUAL 3
DEPENDS (VOLUNTARY) 4
DK/REFUSED 5

b) Building new schools in the inner city or building new schools in the suburbs.

INNER CITY 1
SUBURBS 2
EXACTLY EQUAL 3
DEPENDS (VOLUNTARY) 4
DK/REFUSED 5

c) Renovating and updating present schools in the inner city or renovating and updating present schools in the suburbs.

INNER CITY 1
SUBURBS 2
EXACTLY EQUAL 3
DEPENDS (VOLUNTARY) 4
DK/REFUSED 5

d) Preparing students to enter the workplace directly after high school or preparing students to enter a four-year college or university directly after high school.

WORKFORCE 1
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY 2
EXACTLY EQUAL 3
DEPENDS (VOLUNTARY) 4
DK/REFUSED 5

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26. Next, students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. What grade would you give . . . **(READ LIST. ROTATE.)**

	A	B	C	D	F	DK/ REF
a) Public Schools in the United States	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Public Schools in the state of North Carolina	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
ASK Q26D ONLY OF PARENTS OF KID(S) IN CMS, PRIVATE OR CHARTER SCHOOL						
d) Your oldest child's school	1	2	3	4	5	6

ASK EVERYONE

35. Which of these statements best describes your awareness of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation?

I've never heard of it 1
I've heard of it but don't know much about it 2
I am familiar with the organization 3
DK/REFUSED 4

The following questions are simply used to compare different groups of people.

A. Counting yourself, how many adults, age 18 or older, live in your household?
ADULTS: _____
DK/REFUSED 9

B. How many children, age 17 or younger, live in this household?
CHILDREN: _____
DK/REFUSED 9

D. What is your age?
AGE: _____
DK/REFUSED 99

(IF DK OR REFUSED SAY:) I don't need to know exactly. Could you tell me if you are 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 or older?

E. What is your race?
WHITE 1
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN 2
AMERICAN INDIAN 3
ASIAN 4
OTHER 5
DK/REFUSED 6

F. Are you of Hispanic origin or descent?
YES 1
NO 2
DK/REFUSED 3

G. What was the last grade of school you completed?

8TH GRADE OR LESS 1
SOME HIGH SCHOOL (NOT H.S. GRADUATE) 2
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE 3
SPECIAL/TECHNICAL TRAINING (NOT COLLEGE) 4
SOME COLLEGE
(NOT GRAD FROM 4-YEAR COLLEGE) 5
COLLEGE GRADUATE (FROM 4-YEAR COLLEGE) 6
POST-GRADUATE STUDY 7
ADVANCED DEGREE (MS, MBA, PHD) 8
DK/REFUSED 9

H. Finally, was your total household income last year before taxes -- below $40,000 or above $40,000?

(IF SAY EXACTLY $40,000, CIRCLE CODE "1" UNDER QH2 BELOW)

BELOW $40,000 ..... (1) ABOVE $40,000 ..... (2)

REFUSED **(READ ENDING)** (3)

H1. And was that . . .

(READ LIST)
Less than $20,000 1
$20,000 to $30,000 2
or $30,000 to $40,000 3
DK/REFUSED 4

H2. And was that . . .**(READ LIST)**

$40,000 to $50,000 1
$50,000 to $60,000 2
$60,000 to $75,000 3
or more than $75,000 4
DK/REFUSED 5

"Thank you for your time and participation in this survey. "

01

Appendix C

Profile of School Districts According to Demographic Information Provided by Survey Respondents

RACE	White	African American	American Indian	Asian	Other
District 1	82%	13%	0%	1%	3%
District 2	37%	61%	1%	<0.5%	1%
District 3	35%	62%	0%	1%	3%
District 4	73%	24%	1%	1%	1%
District 5	95%	4%	<0.5%	1%	1%
District 6	91%	8%	0%	0%	1%

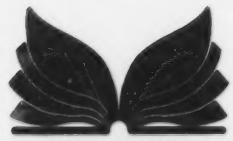
HISPANIC ORIGIN OR DESCENT	Yes	No	DK/ Refused
District 1	3%	94%	2%
District 2	1%	94%	5%
District 3	2%	97%	1%
District 4	3%	97%	1%
District 5	<0.5%	99%	1%
District 6	5%	95%	0%

AGE	18-34	35-54	55+
District 1	29%	50%	21%
District 2	31%	42%	27%
District 3	29%	45%	25%
District 4	33%	44%	24%
District 5	22%	41%	36%
District 6	24%	53%	23%

INCOME	<$40,000	$40,000+ & refused to be more specific	$40,000-<$50,000	$50,000-<$60,000	$60,000-$75,000	>$75,000	Refused
District 1	16%	5%	9%	9%	12%	33%	16%
District 2	48%	3%	6%	10%	6%	16%	11%
District 3	49%	4%	10%	9%	8%	13%	16%
District 4	31%	6%	9%	6%	12%	27%	9%
District 5	16%	15%	5%	9%	7%	34%	15%
District 6	11%	12%	12%	10%	10%	33%	12%

YEARS IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY	5 or Less	6-10	11-20	>20	DK/ Refused
District 1	23%	30%	16%	31%	<0.5%
District 2	7%	13%	18%	62%	1%
District 3	11%	7%	13%	67%	2%
District 4	12%	22%	19%	47%	0%
District 5	15%	12%	27%	45%	1%
District 6	21%	19%	27%	33%	0%

Note: Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.



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